

# Tripurantaka – The Power of One [Adiyogi Book Preview]

Sadhguru tells us the story of Shiva as Tripurantaka, and the significance behind this tale.

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*Sadhguru tells us the story of Shiva as Tripurantaka, and the significance behind this tale. This article is an excerpt from Sadhguru's latest book "[Adiyogi: The Source of Yoga](#)", releasing on Mahashivratri, February 24. Preorder today on [Amazon](#) (India only) and get 25% off.*

**Sadhguru:** It happened...

The evil monarchs of the universe used their occult powers and created three flying worlds. These were called Tripura, the three cities. With these flying cities as their vehicles, the monarchs were invincible. They attacked, raped, plundered, pillaged and destroyed. Gods and human beings were at their mercy. Nobody could stop them because their cities were mobile.

The benevolent forces knew they had to be stopped, but nobody had the power to do so. Then Brahma said, "Only if these cities are shot down by a single strike can these evil ones be vanquished. Otherwise, it is impossible to kill them as they regenerate themselves."

But where could they find an archer who could shoot down three flying cities with a single shaft?

They thought long and hard. At last, Vishnu said, “There is one. Only one.”

Everybody knew whom he meant. Adiyogi was also known as Sharva, the Cosmic Archer.

They went to him, troubled and imploring. “These three orbiting cities must first come into alignment,” replied Adiyogi. “Then I shall act.”

So, they now waited for the time when the three flying cities arranged themselves in a single line – a rare occurrence that happened for just a moment once in many cycles of time.

Looking at all the frivolous preparations that the kings had made, Adiyogi laughed. He simply opened his third eye and shot a single shaft.

In the meantime, they began to prepare planet Earth as Shiva’s chariot. The sun and the moon were its wheels. Brahma became the charioteer. They used Mount Meru, the great Himalayan mountain, as the bow. The cosmic serpent became the string. But there was no shaft. So Vishnu converted himself into a powerful weapon for the purpose.

Fully equipped, they waited. The time drew near. At last the three aerial cities converged in a single line. Looking at all the frivolous preparations that the kings had made, Adiyogi laughed. He simply opened his third eye and shot a single shaft.

The searing shaft pierced the three cities. They erupted into a blazing fireball that tumbled and fell to the Earth in a great white cloud of ash. The evil monarchs, and their terrible rule of violence and injustice, came to an end. A hush fell upon the entire universe.

The good kings and divine beings celebrated, rejoicing at the death of their foes. But Adiyogi merely sat, tears pouring down his face.

They asked perplexed, “Why do you grieve? You have just vanquished Tripura and the most terrible and corrupt rulers in the universe.” Adiyogi said, “It doesn’t matter how corrupt they were. They were still a part of me. If this existence is my creation, so is maya – delusion. And the magnificent cities that they built were a product of their ingenuity. I cannot celebrate their destruction.”

And so, the three lines of ash on Shiva’s forehead are a symbolic statement that human fear, rage and lust can be felled.

He took the ashes that remained of the three cities and smeared them across his forehead in three horizontal lines. He declared, “Someday, like these three cities, I will destroy the three dimensions of this cosmos.” And so, Adiyogi came to be called Tripurantaka, the Supreme Destroyer of the Three Worlds.

The “three cities” continue to wreak havoc in human life. They seem deceptively lifelike, but are essentially unreal for they are not rooted on this planet. They are products of the human mind – ephemeral psychological realms. They are not the consequence of prakriti – nature – but of maya – the human mind lost in its own hypnosis. The result is an endless cycle of pride, rage and avarice. Try as one might to destroy them, these flying realms are elusive; they take wing and escape from our grasp.

When human beings become meditative, it is not that all their negative emotions vanish at once. They cannot. For love and hatred, fear and compassion, joy and misery, agony and ecstasy – all these are the outcome of the same fundamental energy we call life. It is the same energy arranging itself in a million kaleidoscopic shapes and forms. They cannot be vanquished separately because they have no autonomous existence. They can only be dismantled when the fundamental delusion of separateness is destroyed.

It is significant that Adiyogi does not hate those whom he destroys. He sees that they are ensnared in their own hypnotic delusion.

As you walk [the path of yoga](#), pride, fury and greed gradually align themselves in a single direction. Pride arises out of a mistaken sense of significance of the self. When this self-importance is threatened, fury is the result, while greed is the fuel that fosters that self-importance. The three are, therefore, inseparable. Once these scattered energies are aligned, the guru shoots them down with a single arrow. The aspirant is then free of a life of psychological oscillation and fracture.

And so, the [three lines of ash on Shiva's forehead](#) are a symbolic statement that human fear, rage and lust can be felled. Once they are routed, they can never stand again. When a seeker draws these lines on his forehead even today, this is what he is telling the world: "I have conquered these three aspects of life. Now I am free to become unbounded." And thus, the story reiterates an ancient esoteric truth: that the number three is essentially one.

The number three has many other levels of significance. The word trikalagnani has been used in the tradition to describe one who knows the past, present and future. The past, present and future are not three different places; they are a single happening, here and now. When you live this moment profoundly, you experience time not serially but simultaneously – not as three, but one. You then wake up to the fact that mystics have known since the dawn of time: that this moment is eternity.

It is significant that Adiyogi does not hate those whom he destroys. He sees that they are ensnared in their own hypnotic delusion. He knows that when their [self-created psychological world](#) is destroyed, the three will perish. And the cosmos will return once more to the immaculate, non-fragmented reality that it always was and will forever fundamentally remain – the domain of Shiva.

**Editor's Note:** Sadhguru's latest book "[Adiyogi: The Source of Yoga](#)", is releasing on Mahashivratri, February 24. Preorder today on [Amazon](#) (India only) and get 25% off.